

## **Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation**

by Judge Benjamin R. Norris (ret.)<sup>1</sup>

### What is the Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation (AFFCF)?

AFFCF is a local 501(c)(3) organization that provides children in foster care in Arizona with awards for social, athletic and educational opportunities that are not funded by the standard DCS allowances or in any other way. When I was hearing cases in the Juvenile Court, I had a number of hearings in which it was obvious that a particular foster child would benefit significantly if we could just find a way to provide a simple good or service that was not covered by any of the DCS allowances, which is why I was so pleased to find AFFCF.

### So what exactly does AFFCF do to help Arizona kids in foster care?

Even if you think you already know about AFFCF, you may not be aware of all of the different things AFFCF does, so ask yourself if you know of a child in foster care who could use any of the following:

- Athletic Registration and Equipment (sign-up/registration fees, soccer cleats, etc.)
- Apartment Set-Up (for youth aging out of foster care; covers things such as pots and pans, dishes, towels, shower curtains, rugs, cleaning supplies, lamps, small appliances, etc.)
- Bicycles, Scooters, Skates and Skateboards
- Camp (up to one week of summer camp or other camp per child per year)
- Citizenship/Immigration (fees for green card or immigration physicals, but not attorney fees)
- Class pictures (once a year per child)
- Clothing (special event clothing only, e.g. prom, 8th grade graduation, Quinceañera, etc.)
- Graduation Expenses (i.e., cap, gown, ring, yearbook, and other related expenses)
- Instrument Rental (in 12-week funding periods; once initial request is approved, renewals can also be processed in 3-month increments)
- Lessons (12-week funding periods for gymnastics, karate, music, swimming, etc.; once initial request is approved, renewals can also be processed in 3-month increments)
- Optical Expenses (may be considered if DES will not fund; contacts can be considered for one-time only, and documentation is required that states a specific, special need for the youth)
- School Field Trips (class trips to Catalina Island, etc.)
- Theme Park Admissions (only for parks outside Arizona)
- Tutoring Services (12-week funding periods)
- Driving Lessons (for those who have turned 18 and aged out of foster care; foster children under 18 are generally not allowed to drive for liability reasons).

For the most part, AFFCF will consider paying 100% of the cost of these items. AFFCF does have limits on how much it can pay for any one item, but AFFCF will work with foster placements and providers of goods/services in an effort to cover 100% of the costs. AFFCF

---

<sup>1</sup>Benjamin R. Norris is a retired Maricopa County Superior Court judge and a member of the board of directors of Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation. The views expressed in this article are his and do not necessarily represent the views of the Court.

assistance does require submitting an award application and receiving approval from AFFCF before purchase; AFFCF cannot reimburse for anything paid for prior to receiving approval. But applying is easy; just visit AFFCF.org, click on the “General Awards” tab, and then click on “Award Application” (or contact AFFCF by mail or phone; see below). Remember, in its 30 year history, AFFCF has never turned down a request that fell within its guidelines.

AFFCF also is the go-to source for information on how to obtain other goods and services for children in foster care that the agency does not cover. For example, AFFCF does not pay for furniture, regular-use clothing and some other things, but AFFCF can help you find them from other sources. Similarly, while AFFCF generally does not pay for electronics (such as laptops for older students), AFFCF sometimes receives donated items that it can distribute.

#### How can I help AFFCF help Arizona kids in Foster Care?

How does AFFCF pay for these things? While we do receive some grants, the vast majority of our funds come from individual donors. These donations are supported by Arizona’s Qualified Foster Care Organization tax credit, which provides that donations to AFFCF qualify for a tax credit of up to \$800 for couples filing jointly (\$400 for individuals). Unlike a tax deduction, a tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction in the donor’s tax liability. This means that a couple giving \$800 in calendar year 2015 will see their Arizona tax liability reduced by \$800 (or their refund increased by \$800) when filing their 2015 Arizona tax return. AFFCF will even send donors the Arizona tax form they need to claim the credit at the end of the 2015 year. Finally, donors do not need to itemize to claim the tax credit – any couple who would otherwise owe \$800 (or \$400 for individuals) in Arizona income tax for 2015 can take advantage of this tax credit. Donating is easy; just visit AFFCF.org, click on the “Donate” tab, and then click on “Tax Credit” (or contact AFFCF by mail or phone). Remember, no one needs to donate to AFFCF in order to receive an award from AFFCF, but donations are what make our awards possible.

#### Contacting AFFCF

Finally, if you need to contact us, AFFCF’s direct telephone line is (602) 252-9445, the website is AFFCF.org, and the mailing address is 1645 E. Missouri Ave., Ste. 220, Phoenix, AZ 85016. We look forward to hearing from you!